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DEPARTMENT FOR IO/UNP, EUR/SCE, NEA/IAP, AND AF/W

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [OIC](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [KV](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: OIC SPECIAL ENVOY MEETS WITH SENEGALESE FOREIGN
MINISTER

REF: DAKARA 496

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Jay T. Smith for reasons 1.5 B/D

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 22 Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Sada Cumber, accompanied by Charge and political counselor, met with Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidane Gadio to discuss his country's new role as chair of the 57-nation OIC following Senegal's hosting of the OIC summit in March. Special Envoy Cumber shared with the Foreign Minister his plan for supporting the OIC's initiatives and the MOU he hopes to sign with the OIC Secretary General (SG). Gadio complemented the United States for creating the special envoy position and Special Envoy Cumber on his proposals to assist the OIC's development initiatives. He urged President Bush to invite the OIC SG and Senegal's president to the White house and for the three of them, along with the Special Envoy, to speak out publicly about the importance of holding an Islamo-Judeo-Christian dialogue. End summary.

U.S. Support for OIC Initiatives

¶2. (SBU) Special Envoy Cumber met with Foreign Minister Gadio after having met with Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade. He congratulated Senegal on the success of the OIC Summit. He told Foreign Minister Gadio that he hoped to work closely with President Wade and OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu explaining that the his role as OIC Special Envoy was not only to act as the U.S. representative to the OIC, its members, and Muslim communities in non-OIC countries, but also to oversee U.S. support for the OIC's initiatives. Special Envoy Cumber shared with Gadio the draft MOU that he hoped to sign with SG Ihsanoglu and outlined the three areas on which the United States would focus -- science and technology, enhancing the status of women, and education) emphasizing that these themes were drawn from the OIC's initiatives. Moreover, he informed Gadio of his plan to establish a digital library in the ten poorest OIC member countries.

The Importance of Senegalese Leadership as OIC Chair

¶3. (C) The Special Envoy emphasized the U.S. desire to be supportive of the OIC's own initiatives and stressed the USG does not wish to impose anything on the OIC and its members. He asked Gadio for his guidance and support. The OIC members would benefit greatly from President Wade's leadership and experience, he said, urging the Senegalese President to size the opportunity of OIC chairmanship to steer the OIC members in the same moderate direction that Senegal has followed.

U.S. Muslims as Role Model for Muslim World

¶14. (C) Special Envoy Cumber noted the positive example the more than five million Muslims in the United States could serve for the world,s Muslims. He emphasized that although there was great philosophical, cultural, and national diversity in the U.S. Muslim population there was also great harmony. This combination of diversity and harmony should serve as a model for the diverse groups of Muslims in the world, he said.

Islamic-Christian Dialogue or &Three Revealed Religions⁸

¶15. (C) In addition, Special Envoy Cumber informed Foreign Minister Gadio of his plan to organize a summit at the White House with heads of the 10-15 largest Muslim development NGOs and expressed support for President Wade,s proposal to organize a dialogue between the West and the Muslim world. During the Special Envoy,s meeting with President Wade (reftel), Wade emphasized that the dialogue should be an Islamic-Christian dialogue not a Islamo-Judeo-Christian dialogue as proposed by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Gadio, however, opined that there was not enough time left in President Bush,s term to organize a dialogue and instead asked the Special Envoy to urge President Bush to invited President Wade and the OIC SG to the White House to speak about the importance of openness and tolerance, suggesting that their comments could be geared toward the three revealed religions along the lines of Saudi King Abdullah,s proposal for an Islamo-Judeo-Chrsitian dialogue.

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¶16. (C) Gadio urged the United States to take advantage of the Senegalese chairmanship of the OIC. He said that Senegal would be working closely with the OIC SG during the next three years. President Wade and the OIC SG both have the vision and openness necessary to make a difference, he argued. He suggested that the United States take on the problem of &Islamophobia,⁸ which was one of the themes addressed at this year,s OIC summit. While commenting that he personally was not worried about this phenomenon, he observed that many Muslims are convinced that Islamophobia is widespread. By tackling this issue head on, it would endear the United States to many in the Muslim world, he asserted.

Recognition of Kosovo

¶17. (C) Special Envoy Cumber urged Foreign Minister Gadio to use his influence to persuade OIC members to recognize Kosovo. Gadio responded that Senegal had worked to convince many OIC members before the summit. He reported that several Arab countries asked rhetorically why is acceptable for the Kosovars to declare independence, but the same is not true for the Palestinians. When asked about the Africa bloc, Gadio said that many African countries did not feel particularly close to the issue and that they expressed concerns about setting a dangerous precedent for separatist movements given the artificial nature of Africa,s colonially derived borders. According to Gadio, Qatar, Kuwait, and others indicated before the summit that they were prepared to recognize Kosovo before the summit, but failed to do so. He undertook to contact them and Gabon to urge them to do so now. Gadio also promised to work on persuading other countries in the Africa bloc to recognize Kosovo.

Comment

¶18. (C) While President Wade seemed to have difficulties in separating his roles as chair of the OIC and president of Senegal when he met with the Special Envoy, his Foreign

Minister clearly believes that Senegal can have a significant impact on the OIC members and the Muslim world during its three-year chairmanship. Moreover, he clearly believes it is in the mutual interest of the United States and Senegal to take advantage of this window of opportunity. Senegal's history as tolerant, moderate society with a large Muslim majority and a dynamic Catholic minority and its heretofore relatively successful democratic institutions marry up nicely with the Special Envoy's message about religious harmony and diversity in the United States serving as a model for the Muslim world. Moreover, if President Bush were to take up the Foreign Minister's suggestion of a White House summit with President Wade and the OIC SG, there is little doubt that President Wade, who craves the spotlight of the world stage would, would do his best to promote such a move among the OIC members.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by Special Envoy Sada Cumber.
SMITH